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Monthly report of the Secretary-General on Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraphs 6, 13 and 16 of Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), paragraph 15 of Security Council resolution 1564 (2004), paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 1574 (2004), paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 1590 (2005), and paragraph 11 of Security Council resolution 1706 (2006). It covers the month of August 2006.

II. Insecurity in Darfur

2. During the reporting period, the overall situation in Darfur deteriorated considerably. The decision of the Government of the Sudan to deploy a large number of military troops to Darfur signals its apparent determination to pursue a military solution to the crisis in the region.

3. The signatories of the Darfur Peace Agreement signed on 5 May 2006 maintained the ceasefire towards each other through the reporting period. However, during the same period, serious violence flared between Darfur Peace Agreement signatories and non-signatories, in breach of the Agreement and 17 December 2004 N'Djamena ceasefire obligations. The 19 August ambush of an African Union fuel convoy, which took place at Kuma, claimed the lives of two peacekeepers, and attacks against humanitarian actors continued unabated. Banditry was rampant across most of Darfur. Militia groups continued to attack civilians and internally displaced persons, and internally displaced person camp security remained very precarious, with an alarming surge in violence towards women and girls. The region is again descending into a vicious cycle of violence.

4. On 28 July, the Sudanese Armed Forces, reportedly assisted by Janjaweed militia, clashed with Darfur Peace Agreement non-signatory forces in the Jebel Moon area of Western Darfur. On 18 August, unknown assailants believed to belong to non-signatory groups attacked a Sudanese Armed Forces camp at Goz Mino, killing three Sudanese Armed Forces soldiers. On 24 August, another armed group ambushed a convoy of the Government of the Sudan near Abu Soroug in Western Darfur, killing the Assistant Commissioner of Kulbus and six others. Government-affiliated militia also repeatedly attacked villages near Jebel Marra between 17 July and 2 August, killing 12 civilians and looting over a thousand cattle.

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5. In the meantime, the Government of the Sudan and Minawi troops of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) attacked National Redemption Front (NRF) forces north of El Fasher throughout the reporting period. In particular, fighting erupted between the NRF and Sudanese Armed Forces and SLM-Minawi forces on 28 July around Kulkul, 60 kilometres north of El Fasher, and resulted in the capture of Kulkul by Sudanese Armed Forces on 6 August. The same day, NRF forces attacked and captured Sayeh village, 90 kilometres north-east of El Fasher. On 28 August, Sudanese Armed Forces and NRF forces reportedly resumed fighting west of Kulkul with aerial bombing from government aircraft. Sudanese Armed Forces captured Abu Sakin and Kulkul from the NRF on 28 August, and Um Sidir on 31 August, while introducing additional troops to Northern Darfur. In early September, Sudanese Armed Forces also moved a considerable number of forces north of El Geneina along the Chad border and north from Kordofan into the Sayeh area.

6. In the meantime, the Sudanese Armed Forces has reportedly deployed aircraft to Northern Darfur for reconnaissance, logistics support and bombing raids. Reports indicate that a government aircraft bombed Hassan village near Kulkul on 29 July, killing at least one civilian and injuring seven others. Villagers from Gosh Marakh, Um Hashab, and Yonka reported bombings in their areas between 30 July and 1 August. A Government of the Sudan Antonov aircraft crash-landed at El Fasher airport on 7 August. NRF fighters claimed to have crippled it with ground-fire around Sayeh. At the 9 August Ceasefire Commission meeting held in El Fasher, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) alleged that the Sudanese Armed Forces was using white helicopters and aircraft in support of their ground forces. On 28 and 29 August, reports were received that aircraft had bombed areas near Tura, Sayeh, and Um Sidir, and that the attacks resulted in a number of civilian casualties.

7. As mentioned in paragraph 3 above, on 19 August, a group of armed men in 15 vehicles ambushed an African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) convoy of 12 fuel tankers near Kuma, 80 kilometres north-east of El Fasher. The AMIS protection force resisted and called for reinforcements. In the heavy fighting that followed, the AMIS force killed 12 attackers, while 2 AMIS soldiers were killed and 3 wounded.

8. Armed robbery of humanitarian vehicles and convoys grew increasingly brazen over the reporting period, continuing a recent trend. On 31 July, two armed men stole an international non-governmental organization vehicle in the Abu Shouk internally displaced person camp in Northern Darfur. On 24 August, two United Nations agency trucks disappeared between Tawila and Kabkabiya. On 15 and 16 August, armed men hijacked and stole three vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) near El Fasher; on 30 August, the ICRC confirmed the death of one of their drivers. That death adds to the growing death toll of humanitarians in Darfur; 12 died in July and August alone.

9. Throughout Darfur, bandits looted non-governmental organization vehicles and stole cash and communications equipment from passengers and drivers. On 29 July, 6 armed men ambushed a 29-truck United Nations humanitarian convoy between Habila and El Geneina and robbed the drivers. On 3 August, unknown assailants attacked and looted a United Nations truck carrying food south of Nyala. On 25 August, 3 armed men ambushed a 7-truck food convoy and robbed the drivers.

10. Raids on commercial traffic also continued. On 2 August, a group of armed men attacked and robbed a bus travelling from El Fasher to Nyala, killing 7 passengers and injuring 12. On 11 August, 4 armed men attacked a 21-truck commercial convoy south of Nyala and robbed the drivers. On 17 August, 10 armed men on horseback ambushed 2 trucks on the way to Gereida market, killing 1 and injuring 6 people before looting the trucks and robbing the passengers.

11. Also in Northern Darfur after capturing Korma town on 5 July from the Abdul Wahid faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), SLA-Minawi elements, who are now allied with the government forces on the ground, attacked nearby villages, looting livestock and killing at least 100 civilians. Those and other clashes resulted in almost 20,000 internally displaced persons arriving in Northern Darfur camps in July. Displaced persons reported indiscriminate killing, rape and abduction. Villagers who remained in place reported SLA-Minawi harassment, beatings, and intimidation; some reported that SLA-Minawi and Zaghawa fighters told them to leave their villages for the internally displaced person camps. SLA-Minawi elements also harassed people trying to return to their villages, while also extorting money and confiscating documents.

12. Security in internally displaced person camps remained very precarious, especially where AMIS was unable to deploy or patrol. AMIS is operating in some internally displaced person camps, but camp leaders have warned the mission to stay away from others. Internally displaced person communities have increasingly splintered along communal lines into pro- and anti-Darfur Peace Agreement groups. In Shangil Tobayi camp, reports indicate that armed men harassed and robbed internally displaced persons after enquiring about their ethnicity. On 10 August, a Fur internally displaced person was shot dead in Kalma camp, sparking clashes between Fur and Zaghawa internally displaced persons in which two were seriously injured. An AMIS platoon intervened and remained in the camp overnight to ease tension. On 12 August, AMIS organized a reconciliation meeting between community leaders from the two groups. On 9 August, Civil Affairs Officers of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) arranged discussions between AMIS and internally displaced persons in Zalingei, allowing internally displaced persons to express their concerns and AMIS to resume some patrols.

13. The militarization of some internally displaced person camps continued unabated over the reporting period. SLA-Minawi soldiers harassed internally displaced persons in the camps around El Fasher, especially Zam Zam camp. On 13 August, an international non-governmental organization medical team was forced to leave Kalma camp when assaulted by two armed men. On 23 August, SLA-Abdul Wahid troops harassed civilians in Otash camp in Southern Darfur.

14. Rumours of poisoning have hindered water supply and vaccination efforts in camps across Darfur. On 20 July, the rumours apparently prompted an angry crowd of internally displaced persons to beat to death three employees of the government Department for Water and Environmental Sanitation in Hassa Hissa camp near Zalingei. Internally displaced persons have challenged and threatened vaccination and sanitation workers in camps across Darfur.

15. Various militia groups continued to operate with impunity throughout Darfur, attacking villages, stealing livestock and harassing internally displaced persons. Some have settled in cleared villages near Zalingei and are cultivating the land.

16. Relations between Chad and the Sudan improved considerably over the reporting period. Under a 26 July agreement signed in N'Djamena, both countries agreed to create a political commission to follow up on the implementation of the agreement. Furthermore, they agreed to establish a mixed military commission to monitor the situation along common borders, as well as deploy a mixed military force to Bahai, Tiné, Koulbous, Khor Baranga, Amdjereme, Adré, Adé, Modoina, El Geneina, Tissi and Amdoukoum. Chad and the Sudan normalized diplomatic relations on 8 August.

17. However, Chadian armed opposition groups remained active in Western Darfur. On 11 August, suspected Chadian armed opposition group members harassed villagers in Chichir and Korgi. On 12 August, armed men stole cattle from Geilu village, before crossing the border into Chad.

18. On 23 August, Chadian officials reportedly arrested seven JEM leaders in N'Djamena, but released them the same day. On 28 August in Khartoum, the Foreign Minister of Chad stated that his Government intended to hand over 17 JEM and 30 SLA-Abdul Wahid leaders to the African Union.

III. Human rights and protection

19. The killing and suffering of civilians during attacks on villages and internally displaced persons make clear that combatants are not distinguishing between civilian and military targets.

20. Sexual and gender-based violence increased dramatically throughout Darfur since my last report. Militia forces continued to attack female internally displaced persons when they left the confines of their camps to undertake income-generating activities, such as gathering grass, fruit and firewood. Around Kalma camp, such attacks increased from 10 per month to almost 10 per day by mid-July. On 23 July, a group of several hundred armed militia raped 21 women north of Kalma camp; the next day, another 17 women were raped in the same location. Several internally displaced women and girls, including two girls collecting grass adjacent to a Sudanese Armed Forces camp near Tawila internally displaced person camp, alleged that government personnel had attacked them. In Northern Darfur, fleeing internally displaced persons reported that various armed groups were targeting women and girls believed to support rival factions.

21. Government authorities appear unable or reluctant to address the wave of sexual violence. The local government in Southern Darfur has downplayed sexual assaults and linked them to general criminal activity in the camps.

22. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Sudan, Dr. Sima Samar, visited the Sudan from 11 to 17 August. She is extremely disturbed by the critical human rights situation in the region and the signs that there will be a further deterioration in the coming months if action is not taken to protect civilians from attacks and end the conflict through peaceful means. In discussions with senior government officials, she raised concerns about the killings of civilians, rape, torture and displacement.

23. On numerous occasions during the reporting period, authorities obstructed United Nations human rights officers in the performance of their duties, in breach of government obligations under the status-of-forces agreement. On 15 August, the

Humanitarian Aid Commission prevented an UNMIS helicopter from taking off from Nyala airport. On 17 August, Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service officers prevented a United Nations agency staff member from boarding a helicopter in the same airport. Also on 17 August, the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service briefly detained a United Nations agency driver in El Geneina. The Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service continues to regularly restrict UNMIS access to Darfur detention facilities.

IV. Humanitarian situation

24. Continued fighting, attacks on humanitarian workers, official obstruction, together with the arrival of the difficult rainy season have hampered humanitarian efforts. United Nations agencies now have considerably less access to affected populations than in late 2004 and most of 2005.

25. Once again, Darfur is becoming an increasingly difficult and very dangerous environment for humanitarian workers. The World Food Programme indicated that it could not reach 350,000 beneficiaries in August, up from 290,000 in June. Direct attacks on humanitarian operations have forced many organizations to suspend all but the most essential operations. The World Health Organization has reported that 40 per cent of the people of Northern Darfur are now without basic health care as a result. The vaccination rate has declined from 90 per cent in 2005 to 20 per cent in 2006.

26. Widespread instability and insecurity have had a substantial impact on agriculture and food security. Fighting near Tawila, Korma, Jebel Moon, and Jebel Marra has forced local farmers to flee during the few weeks available for planting the sorghum and millet upon which thousands depend for their sustenance. Although humanitarian agencies have distributed seeds, this year's harvest will be a poor one because of continued insecurity, which makes maintaining and harvesting crops difficult.

27. Heavy seasonal rains have also hindered humanitarian efforts and brought additional health threats. Flooded roads in Southern Darfur have forced some non-governmental organizations to postpone activities. Community health experts fear that flooding may contaminate drinking water, and cholera outbreaks have already been confirmed in Western Darfur. Acute watery diarrhoea has claimed eight lives in Monroe internally displaced person camp alone, including four children under the age of five.

V. Implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement

28. In spite of the efforts of the wider international community and major African Union and United Nations initiatives, no additional signatories joined the Darfur Peace Agreement during the reporting period. Implementation of the Agreement is well behind schedule, and the inability of Darfur Peace Agreement mechanisms and arrangements to halt the continuing violence has undermined the credibility of the Agreement.

29. Delegations from the Government of the Sudan and the international community visited Abdul Wahid in Asmara during the reporting period in

unsuccessful attempts to persuade him to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement. Abdul Wahid did not entirely reject the Agreement, but he called for amendments or additions to satisfy his four political demands: a role in reviewing the Janjaweed disarmament; a national Vice-Presidency position for Darfur; more compensation; and the merging of the three Darfur states into one region.

30. At the same time, Abdul Wahid's authority has reportedly been challenged by several influential commanders. On 28 July, one of them, Ahmed Abdul Shafi Bassey issued a press statement claiming that the SLM Military Council and Field Command had dismissed Abdul Wahid. On 18 August, Ahmed Abdul Shafi Bassey announced plans for an "All Sudan Liberation Movement Army Conference" to clarify the leadership and organizational structure. Abdul Wahid's position and strength within the Sudan Liberation Army remain unclear.

31. In addition to the Abdul Wahid faction of the SLA, the "anti-Darfur Peace Agreement bloc" consists of the G19 and the JEM, elements of which formed the National Redemption Front in June 2006. The G19 is a group of former SLA-Abdul Wahid commanders and their followers, who were disaffected with Abdul Wahid's negotiating positions at Abuja.

32. The JEM has taken the toughest line against the Darfur Peace Agreement, and appears to be executing its threat to resist the Agreement following the conclusion of the Abuja negotiations. However, the JEM has also been splintered; the JEM-Wing for Peace has reportedly become a partner to the Darfur Peace Agreement, and some JEM commanders in Jebel Moon have eschewed further intra-rebel violence.

33. The NRF has rejected the Darfur Peace Agreement. It is currently the most ethnically diverse of the rebel groups, and includes significant Fur, Marsalis, and Zaghawa contingents. The NRF was founded by Justice and Equality Movement chief Dr. Khalil Ibrahim, Sudan Federal Democr[illegible] Alliance (SFDA) chief Ahmed Ibrahim Diraige, former SLA Deputy Chair and G19 leader Khamis Abdalla Abakar, and Dr. Sharif Harir of the SFDA.

34. On 8 June, several groups signed a Declaration of Commitment to the Darfur Peace Agreement. In its 27 June Communique, the African Union Peace and Security Council recognized them as "partners in the peace process", and the Joint Commission invited them to participate in its meetings. The Darfur Peace Agreement signatories, however, have opposed any significant role or benefits for non-signatories, and the African Union and the parties have yet to develop a plan for including them in the Darfur Peace Agreement implementation process.

35. At the Joint Commission's second meeting, on 3 August, the chairman of the Ceasefire Commission presented a report listing 60 separate ceasefire violations. Upon learning that the Ceasefire Commission had not considered the report, however, the Joint Commission Chairman referred all 60 violations back to the Ceasefire Commission for investigation.

36. The Ceasefire Commission is meeting regularly, but has been largely incapacitated by disagreements over the non-Darfur Peace Agreement signatories' role and the relationship between the N'Djamena and Darfur Peace Agreement ceasefire commissions. On 13 August, AMIS notified the Ceasefire Commission Chairman that it had decided to remove SLA-Abdul Wahid and JEM representatives from the Ceasefire Commission and from AMIS sites.

37. The Ceasefire Commission currently has a backlog of 92 alleged ceasefire violations. Sub-Ceasefire Commissions have now been formed and are functioning, but some lack representation from Darfur Peace Agreement parties and Declaration of Commitment signatories. At the 30 August meeting, the Ceasefire Commission discussed 15 violation reports forwarded by the Sub-Ceasefire Commissions.

38. The parties have also missed several security-related deadlines. The parties have yet to create the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority, which in turn rendered it impossible to meet the 15 June deadline for establishing the Darfur Security Arrangement Implementation Committee, nor has AMIS been able to establish the Joint Logistics Coordination Committee, which was due on 21 May. Also, the African Union has yet to complete the demarcation of areas of control, buffer zones and demilitarized zones; produce a final map indicating the parties' respective areas of control and redeployment zones; or develop a patrol plan for monitoring the buffer zones (all of which were to be complete by 22 June). Also in accordance with the Darfur Peace Agreement, the Government had to restrict Janjaweed activity to designated areas by 20 July, but that deadline has not been met. On 23 June, the Government submitted to the African Union its plan to disarm the Janjaweed. The disarmament plan was tabled for discussion at the Ceasefire Commission on 17 July, and UNMIS sent preliminary comments on the plan to the African Union Ceasefire Commission on 26 July.

39. In relation to power-sharing, the Northern and Southern Darfur state assemblies convened emergency sessions to amend their interim State Constitutions, increasing ministerial and assembly seats as required by the power-sharing provisions of the Darfur Peace Agreement. On 7 August, Minni Minawi was sworn in as Senior Assistant to the President, the fourth-highest position in the National Executive, and as Transitional Darfur Regional Authority Chairman. On 12 August, AMIS opened the African Union Darfur Peace Agreement Implementation Office in Khartoum, which will provide workspace to SLM-Minawi, SLM-Free Will, JEM-Wing of Peace representatives, the African Union Darfur Peace Agreement Implementation team, and the Preparatory Committee for the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. On 9 September, Minni Minawi announced the formation of seven committees for the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, as a first step towards the implementation of the Agreement prior to the formation of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority, and confirmed that the structures of the interim authority for Darfur would include the parties who signed the Declaration of Commitment. In addition to the delays in establishing the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority, a number of other important power-sharing deadlines have been missed, including in finalizing senior government and civil service appointments (as required by 15 June), and in establishing the Darfur Assessment and Evaluation Commission (as required by 14 August).

40. In wealth-sharing, the Joint Assessment Mission has begun preparatory work to identify urgent and longer-term recovery and development needs. The Joint Assessment Mission team includes 40 Sudanese and international experts drawn from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, donors, and academic institutions, and includes both Sudanese and international experts. It was deployed to Nyala in early August, and conducted field visits, focused group discussions, and interviews with key stakeholders in Southern Darfur. Escalating violence, however, significantly impeded its assessment work.

41. The parties have made limited progress on the other Darfur Peace Agreement wealth-sharing provisions. They have yet to establish the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund or the Darfur Rehabilitation and Resettlement Commission (both were required, according to the Agreement, by 15 June), or a Compensation Commission (expected by 15 July). None of the Darfur state legislatures have established state land commissions, which according to the Darfur Peace Agreement were to be created immediately.

42. At the same time, the African Union has not yet appointed its nominee to chair the Preparatory Committee for the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. However, the African Union has been engaging the parties, constituents and the international community on an informal basis. At the same time, UNMIS and AMIS are collaborating on Darfur Peace Agreement and Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation public outreach efforts, and held several workshops in July and August. Those activities, however, remain limited to Darfur's largest towns; the current security environment precludes major outreach efforts in smaller communities and internally displaced person camps.

43. On 2 August, President Bashir sent me the Plan of the Government of the Sudan for the Restoration of Stability and Protection of Civilians in Darfur, as promised in our discussions on 2 July at the African Union Summit in Banjul, Gambia. I replied to President Bashir on 25 August, welcoming the fact that the plan identified a number of areas for United Nations support to the peace process in Darfur, including to the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation and humanitarian operations, but indicating my concern that the Government's plan did not indicate a willingness on the part of the Government to agree to the transition from AMIS to a United Nations peace operation in Darfur.

44. In my response, I also expressed my serious concern over the deployment of a large number of Sudanese Armed Forces troops to Darfur, in the light of the provision in the Darfur Peace Agreement against the deployment of "additional military forces into Darfur by the Government of Sudan without the consent of the Ceasefire Commission". Any offensive military action by the Sudanese Armed Forces in Darfur would also contravene Security Council resolutions 1590 (2005) and 1591 (2005), which emphasize that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Darfur.

VI. United Nations support to the African Union Mission in the Sudan

45. As of 1 September, AMIS had a total of 7,200 personnel, comprised of 783 military observers and staff officers, 1,425 civilian police, 12 Ceasefire Commission personnel, and a protection force of 4,980.

46. Throughout July and August, UNMIS responded to numerous requests from the African Union for assistance. The United Nations technical staff have assisted AMIS staff in establishing telephone and information technology networks, while the UNMIS civil-military coordinator has trained AMIS personnel on humanitarian issues. At the same time, UNMIS logistics experts briefed AMIS personnel on asset management systems.

47. During the reporting period, with the assistance of the international community, the African Union has begun developing a public information campaign to promote the Darfur Peace Agreement. In that context, UNMIS provided additional public information support to AMIS through the printing of full texts of the Darfur Peace Agreement in English and Arabic, as well as the editing, translation and printing of a summary of the Agreement. Those information products are being disseminated in all areas of Darfur.

VII. Security Council resolution 1706 (2006)

48. On 31 August, the Security Council in its resolution 1706 (2006) decided, without prejudice to its existing mandate and operations as provided for in resolution 1590 (2005), and in order to support the early and effective implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, that the mandate of UNMIS shall be expanded by up to 17,300 international military personnel and by an appropriate civilian component, including up to 3,300 police personnel and up to 16 Formed Police Units, and that it shall deploy to Darfur. In the resolution the Security Council also reaffirmed its strong commitment to the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Sudan and expresses United Nations determination to work with the Government of National Unity to assist in tackling the problems confronting the Sudan. In the resolution, the Security Council invited the consent of the Government of National Unity for the deployment to Darfur of the expanded UNMIS force.

49. In a number of public statements, the Government of the Sudan has rejected in very strong terms the decision of the Security Council with regard to the transition from the African Union to a United Nations peace operation. The adoption of resolution 1706 (2006) was welcomed by senior members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Darfur rebel groups, as well as northern opposition parties. Demonstrations in support of and against Security Council resolution 1706 (2006) were seen throughout Darfur.

50. On 29 August, in Nyala, several thousand students staged a demonstration against a possible transition from AMIS to a United Nations operation; the Wali of Southern Darfur State presented a memorandum of rejection from the Students Union of Southern Darfur to the UNMIS Head of Office. On 1 September 2006, about 3,000 people demonstrated in El Fasher stadium in support of the transition. On 2 September, at least 1,000 demonstrators presented a letter of protest against Security Council resolution 1706 (2006) to the United Nations office at El Fasher. On 3 September, two students were killed when riot police broke up demonstrations in favour of resolution 1706 (2006) in El Fasher. Numerous demonstrations sponsored by the Government were also held in various towns in the region against the implementation of the resolution. On 3 September 2006, students and government officials held a demonstration against the resolution in El Geneina, and handed a note to the Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs there. On 5 September 2006, in Nyala, the representatives organized a demonstration against the resolution, including several thousand students. The demonstration turned violent when students began throwing stones at passing vehicles and United Nations offices and international non-governmental organization compounds. The United Nations requested the government police on

4 September to increase protection of United Nations properties but the requests went largely unanswered.

51. Government officials and their allies appear to be encouraging public sentiments opposing a United Nations transition, often using threatening anti-United Nations language, in violation of the status-of-forces agreement. During the reporting period, President Bashir and Vice-President Taha made remarks, including threatening armed resistance and other violence against the United Nations if Security Council resolution 1706 (2006) is implemented, and even promising to open special camps to train fighters who would violently resist the presence of United Nations peacekeepers in Darfur.

VIII. Observations

52. The grave violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law, which continue to be committed with impunity by the Sudanese Armed Forces, militia, and rebel factions in Darfur, are unacceptable. In that connection, I deplore in the strongest terms the 19 August attack that killed two AMIS soldiers and injured three others. That attack and many others perpetrated in recent weeks can only render the environment in Darfur more dangerous for AMIS peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and ultimately for the people of Darfur, whom the international community has undertaken to assist and help to protect. I extend my heartfelt sympathies to the families of the AMIS soldiers killed.

53. It has now been three months since the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed. However, instead of reconciliation and building of trust, we are witnessing intensified violence and deeper polarization. The region is again on the brink of a catastrophic situation. The latest decision of the Government to seek a military solution and bring more and more troops to the region, coupled with the fighting among armed groups, shows utter disregard for the Darfur Peace Agreement. Signatories and non-signatories alike continue to violate their obligations under the Darfur Peace Agreement and the N'Djamena Ceasefire Agreement. The international community is gravely concerned by reports of government military air support during attacks on civilian populations and by the movement of further military assets into Darfur. I call on all parties in the strongest terms to halt the violence and uphold their obligations to protect civilians.

54. I appeal strongly to those with influence over the groups which have not signed the Darfur Peace Agreement to put pressure on them to adhere to the spirit of the ceasefire and to join the peace process. They must know that the violent pursuit of political goals is not acceptable, and all parties must be reminded that the measures to address the crisis in Darfur need to be consistent with the decisions of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Darfur Peace Agreement.

55. I am also very concerned about the obstruction of United Nations personnel by government authorities in Darfur. That action is in direct contravention of the Government's obligations under the status-of-forces agreement. I call on the Government to ensure that all local authorities in Darfur are reminded of their obligations under the status-of-forces agreement.

56. The Darfur Peace Agreement is a historic document for the Sudan and sets a challenging implementation timetable. The parties and the African Union, assisted

by the international community, should redouble their implementation efforts. In that context, the international donors should offer all appropriate political, material and financial support to those seeking to implement the Darfur Peace Agreement in good faith. The parties should urgently overcome the Ceasefire Commission impasse. That important body must meet regularly and it must be made more inclusive so as to fully investigate reported ceasefire violations.

57. At the same time, it is essential to work to broaden political and popular support for the Darfur Peace Agreement. The Sudanese authorities and the international community must continue their efforts to persuade other parties to sign. Equally important will be broadening public support for the Darfur Peace Agreement through initiatives such as the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation and the speedy implementation of the compensation mechanisms. The Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation should commence as a matter of urgency, and be as broadly inclusive as possible.

58. Darfur is at a critical stage. Insecurity in this troubled region is at its highest levels and humanitarian access is at its lowest levels since 2004. Unless security improves, the world is facing the prospect of having to drastically curtail an acutely needed humanitarian operation.

59. With the number of actors and combat zones multiplying, AMIS is also facing difficulty in carrying out its mandate with regard to the protection of the civilian population and the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement. On 20 September, the African Union Peace and Security Council took a very important step by extending the mandate of the African Union operation until 31 December 2006. The mandate extension and the endorsement of a new Concept of Operations for AMIS are welcome developments. The continued presence of a strong AMIS in Darfur has a vital role to play in protecting civilians and improving a deteriorating security situation until a United Nations operation can be put in place, with the consent of the Government of the Sudan. Once again, I call on the African Union's partners to ensure that the extension of the AMIS mandate by the Peace and Security Council is matched by the rapid and generous provision of the resources that are required for the African Union force to continue its work until the end of its mandate.

60. The Government of the Sudan must also be aware that there can be no military solution to the Darfur conflict. I remain strongly convinced that a United Nations multidimensional operation, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1706 (2006), would be the most appropriate political approach to achieving lasting and sustainable peace in Darfur, and that only such a truly international and impartial operation, with adequate resources and capacity, and with strong African participation, can effectively support the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

61. As the Security Council has recognized, the transition to a United Nations operation will not be possible as long as the Government of the Sudan refuses its consent. Once again, therefore, I urge the Government of the Sudan to embrace the spirit of the African Union and United Nations decisions, to give its consent to the transition, and commit itself to the political process. Governments and leaders who are in a position to influence the events must also make themselves heard and redeem the solemn pledge made in September 2005, when the General Assembly agreed that Governments have a "responsibility to protect" vulnerable civilians from

genocide, ethnic-cleansing, and gross and systematic violations of human rights. The Security Council is expected to play a very special role in this regard, by demonstrating unity of action. There must be a clear, strong and uniform message from the Security Council and the international community about the consequences of rejecting international assistance for the suffering people of Darfur and for failing to exercise the responsibility to protect. In the meantime, the situation in Darfur is becoming more desperate by the day. The United Nations, and I personally, will spare no effort to continue to seek a just, peaceful and urgent solution to this major man-made tragedy of the twenty-first century.